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Instruments and methods are considered by many the nuts and bolts of school testing programs, for both individuals and groups. Too often, the individual is lost in the machinery of such a school program, and data collected becomes the end product of appraisal and assessment. Programs of student appraisal procedures should be developed around eight essential principles, including: (1) there is no single best appraisal technique or procedure to be recommended for all programs, and (2) student appraisal procedures involve study of the self in the situation--the individual in his total environment. The total process of appraisal would best be stimulated through a satisfactory initial counseling interview. The whole staff must also become involved in the appraisal program. Thus appraisal services are viewed as an attempt to accummulate and interpret as much information as possible about the student, to provide as much information as possible to the student and to the staff, and to promote better understanding of individual needs. (Author/KJ)

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INDIVIDUAL APPRAISAL AND ASSESSMENT-- THEIR ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES*

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It would be difficult to conjure up a topic with which there are more uncertainties, and at the same time, a sounder base of principles which can be identified as applicable. Individual appraisal and assessment are frequently identified as "guidance services" administered in schools as one aspect of a fully functioning program. In this context the service is most frequently identified with individual and group standardized testing. Instruments and methods are considered the nuts and bolts of the program. Too often, the "individual" is lost in the machinery of such a school program, and data collected becomes the end product of appraisal and assessment.

Rather than approach this topic through a discussion of instruments and methods, it seems more appropriate to propose essential principles which are operable in guidance and student personnel programs. According to English and English, appraisal is "a judgment to behavior;" assessment is "a method of evaluating personality in which an individual, living in a group under partly controlled physical and social conditions, meets and solves a variety of life-like problems, including stress problems, and is observed and rated by a team of observers." For the guidance and student personnel specialist, the key aspects of these two definitions are related to: (1) judgment based on facts; (2) related to theory; (3) evaluations and; (4) applications of those to the meeting and solving of a variety of lifelike concerns. The essense of these aspects of concern for the topic of this paper is "the focus on the individual through appraisal and assessment in ways that will enhance self-understanding and problem solving." With these considerations in mind, an attempt will be made to provide an Anschauung into some essentials to operational principles for student appraisal procedures growing out of psychological foundations.

Essential Principles for Utilizing Knowledge of Test and Other Data In the Appraisal and Assessment Process

I would like to begin with the statement of eight essential principles around which programs of student appraisal procedures should be developed. These principles, growing out of the psychological foundations, are suggested as a link between knowledge and its application. As with all links of a chain, it should be possible and convenient to conceptualize the process as it relates to the individual.

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Principle One: There is no single best appraisal technique or procedure to be recommended for all programs. Any single procedure can be properly viewed as appropriate depending on the conditions and purposes of appraisal. Standardized tests are not better than pupil data blanks, for example, in any general way. They are properly viewed as better under certain conditions and inappropriate under others.

Observation Rating Scales, Inventories, Anecdotal Records, Interviews, Questionnaires, Autobiographies, and Sociometric devices are all valuable approaches in individual appraisal. Any attempt to develop a hierarchy of best procedures will tend to defeat the overall purpose of the appraisal program.

Principle Two: The effectiveness of student appraisal programs depends upon the active involvement of all professional staff members in the program. Programs of student appraisal carried out primarily by school counselors as "service" to students and faculty are incomplete, and insufficient, and ineffective. This principle applies to participation in collection and in use of appraisal data as well. While the need to participate in collection and the need to participate in the use of appraisal data is not similar for all professional staff members, some need is present in both areas for all if the best use is to be made in focusing on the individual.

Principle Three: To attempt for complete understanding of individuals is wishful thinking. It is wishful because it can never be accomplished, as it is foolhardy because it is unnecessary. The fait accompli of appraisal and assessment procedures is not complete understanding but increased understanding of the individual to the end that it will result in realistic decisions made by that individual. Enough understanding is needed to facilitate positive ways of helping students, but our need for understanding is necessarily limited by our means and opportunity for being of help. What this implies is that the need for appraisal procedures will not be similar in all schools nor the same for all individuals in a particular school.

Principle Four: Understanding and assisting individuals should be concurrent as well as longitudinal. As we attempt to understand students, we are able to help them more; and as we help students, we learn to understand them better. To attempt to segment these two functions is to lose continuity with the total process of individual appraisal. Frequently we will be concentrating somewhat more on one than on the other, but both purposes should always be kept in mind as we attempt to implement a program of guidance and student personnel services.

Principle Five: Student appraisal procedures involve study of the self in the situation--the individual in his total environment. The type of assistance most effective with students in school guidance programs involves approximately equal concentration on these factors in the individual's life. To consider the student independent of his environment is to place undue stress in the student's total ability to help himself. To concentrate primarily on environmental factors is to operate in such a way as to deny to students the right to lead their own lives and to lose sight of the individual. Endless debate has taken place among counselors with regard to this principle and will probably never be completely resolved in terms of scientific knowledge. It must be resolved at least on a theoretical and philosophical basis by each person who is a member of a student appraisal team.

Principle Six: The value of using appraisal procedures in combination has greater potential than the simple accumulative value of their specific piece by failure application. The acceptance of patterns and profiles of data for appraisal purposes grows out of accepting the principle of multiple causation of behavior. The objective in studying behavior should always be aimed at understanding some of the causes rather than attempting to determine the single cause of a specific pupil behavior. No matter how it might be observed, there is probably no single cause which can completely explain the several student actions which lead us to assess him in the first place. Application of this principle requires that both present and past events be considered, that comparisons (both with other students and for a single student) be given attention, and that data pertinent to both the student and his environment be utilized in combinations. This may mean that in gaining this kind of perspective some accuracy of the resultant profile will be sacrificed. It also tends to make our perceptions more meaningful to the individual's situation.

Principle Seven: Student appraisal procedures are not necessary in the same amount or to the same degree or required for all students at the same time. The use of appraisal procedures other than standardized tests has been greatly neglected because of failure to recognize this principle. Refusal to engage in certain appraisal procedures because of a feeling of inadequacy to use them with all students promotes forgetting of the basic concepts of individual differences which form an important part of the foundations of psychological appraisal. To say that some students require more extensive appraisal than others is to suggest simply that all do not require the same amount of attention, not to declare that some students are more worthwhile than others.

Principle Eight: The central purpose of student appraisal procedures is enhanced student self-understanding leading to wiser self-decisions. The knowledge and understanding gained about students can, at best, have only interim value. The self-knowledge and self-understanding we help the student to achieve have lifelong effects. Goals in student appraisal and assessment must be consistent with the goals of guidance; i.e., to foster student development and independence--to help students to reach maturity to that point where our assistance is no longer required. This does not mean that all information we collect concerning a student must be shared with him in order to say it is really used. It does mean that appraisal procedures unaccompanied by the counseling process are lacking in purpose and limited in potentiality. The time required for carrying out programs of student appraisal procedures cannot be justified unless this principle is accepted and put into effect.

Eight "Principles" in the appraisal and assessment process have been noted. In principle number one, seven procedures were listed. It would seem that the total process of self-appraisal and assessment would best be stimulated through a satisfactory initial counseling interview--a journey into the world of understanding and self-perception of the person to be helped. Using Williamson's five categories in diagnostic constructs which follow.

Diagnostic Constructs*

Personality problems. Difficulties in adjusting in social groups, speech difficulties, family conflicts, and infractions of discipline.

Educational problems. Unwise choice of courses of study, differential scholastic achievement, insufficient general scholastic aptitude, ineffective study habits, reading disabilities, insufficient scholastic motivation, over-achievement, under-achievement, adjustment of superior students.

Vocational problems. Uncertain vocational choice, no vocational choice, discrepancy between interest and aptitudes, unwise vocational choice.

Financial problems. Difficulties arising from need for self-support in school and college, correlated questions of student placement.

Health problems. The individual's acceptance of his state of health or physical disabilities or both.

* See bibliography - Williamson

Value of and Need for Program**

Objectives of Appraisal

Because the field of appraisal services is relatively new, information which deals specifically with appraisal is quite limited. Most of the material published pertains to one of the two phases of this service--testing programs and research activities.

For appraisal services to function as a worthwhile and contributing aspect of the total educational process, objectives must be established to define the role of these services. A program of appraisal services is seen as a responsibility of the total professional staff of a school. Each person within his own limited boundaries is responsible to provide a portion of information about students. With this concept of total staff involvement with reference to gathering pertinent information, appraisal services is viewed as an attempt to accumulate and interpret as much information as possible concerning the student to attain a twofold objective: (1) to provide the student with comprehensive information about himself in an attempt to enhance self-understanding and to gain a more complete picture of himself; (2) to provide professional staff members with as much information as possible about the individual to facilitate a better understanding of the student and allow for individual needs in the total educational program.

Testing plays an important role in the total appraisal service and is an essential component of an effective appraisal program. The broad objectives of a testing program are the same as those of education in general. When a school has an organized system of testing which provides information about its students, then it can be said to have a testing program.

** Adapted from Hummel, Dean L. and S. J. Bonham, Pupil Personnel Services In Schools, (Chapter XI "Pupil Appraisal Services") Chicago; Rand McNally and Company, 1968.

A minimum testing program should be designed to meet the needs of individual students. Because they have needs that are common and can be anticipated, students should be tested in groups. Test results should include four types of tests--achievement tests, ability tests, interest inventories, and personality inventories. When studying students and interpreting information, we should be cognizant that there are two major kinds of comparisons. The first is a comparison with regard to a norm. Through this method we look at each student with respect to a group of comparable students. The second kind of comparison concerns itself with the various characteristics of a particular student--a comparison of the student with himself. This is known as idiographic information.

The role of the staff in appraisal must be that of utilizing all forms of information which are secured about students as well as the proper interpretation and application of such information.

As one reviews the purposes of a comprehensive testing program and evaluates the contributions it makes toward education, a parallel can be seen with the appraisal services program. The objectives and purposes of a testing program are not identical to those of a program of appraisal services, but they overlap greatly and are inseparable.

In conjunction with a comprehensive testing program many other resources may be used by appraisal staff members in an attempt to gather pertinent information about students. The following is a list of methods and tools which may be utilized when securing information about an individual:

1. Cumulative folder
2. Counselor and staff observations of student
3. Anecdotal records
4. Rating scales
5. Fact-finding personal interviews
6. Counseling interviews
7. Home visitations
8. Parent-teacher conference
9. Personal data blanks
10. Student autobiography
11. Sociometric inventories

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